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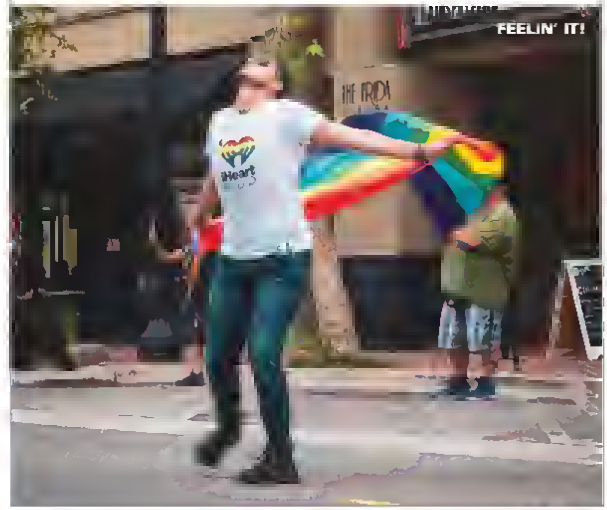

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FELIPE FLORES

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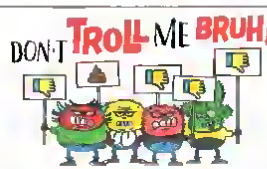

"Let's see if *OC Weekly* will post anything about pro-Trump rallies for his re-election? They likely won't and should be renamed *OC Weakly*"
—*Neil McGee, commenting on Anthony Pignataro's "Our Guide to OC's Impeach Trump Rallies" (June 14)*

Bob Dornan's Ghost responds: 1995 called. It wants your stupid *OC Weakly* insult back.

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Dirty Dana

Ex-congressman Dana Rohrabacher lands in another slimy scandal

A new grotesque money-in-politics scandal emerged last week inside an Orange County courthouse, and it links not only Vladimir Putin, the Donald Trump inauguration committee, a con man, Trump Tower Moscow, Russian spies but also our very own Master of Messes Dana Tyrone Rohrabacher, who in 2012 left a high-end Costa Mesa rental home looking worse than an abused frat house occupied by 200 slobs

Rohrabacher was the self-styled term limits "champion" for his first race in 1988 and stayed in Congress 30 years until this January, after voters booted him—an outcome that robbed me of a 71-year-old scoundrel who regularly filled column inches with nonsense you just can't make up

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» R. SCOTT MOXLEY

You may have heard of Putin, the dictator, thug and KGB-trained murderer, enemy of democracy and, of course, booze-chugging pal of the aforementioned ex-congressman, who, yes, made a career screaming about autocrats destroying freedom and capitalism.

Newport Beach fraudster and Russian emigre Yuri Vanetik and his bodyguard have vacationed in Germany and Holland with Rohrabacher, a tragic feat worthy of cleansing hot showers, condolences and a box of Xanax.

Successfully accused in court of defrauding nearly $5 million from investors in scams, Vanetik likes to associate with such swamp drainers as House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, Trump mouthpiece Rudy Giuliani, members of the Republican Party of Orange County and convicted felon Paul Manafort.

You may love or hate Trump, but at least he was smart enough to reject Rohrabacher's desperate pleas for a cabinet position. Though the president did mislead the public about his own cravings to make hundreds of millions of dollars from a future high-rise in Russia, which could only be built with Putin's approval.

Inside the Ronald Reagan Federal Courthouse in Santa Ana on June 18, Russian-Ukrainian oligarch Pavel Fuks sued Vanetik for allegedly conning him out of $200,000 for non-existent VIP access to Trump's inauguration-week activities, including the parade, balls and swearing-in ceremony where, we've been lobbied, U.S. Park Service aerial photography equipment missed a couple hundred thousand attendees

Fuks also claims he was advised he needed to pay $20,000 to meet then-Congressman Ed Royce (R-Fullerton) and an additional $350,000 for a quick powwow with the 45th president.

The oligarch told reporters he met Trump in 2006 through Trump SoHo project financier Tamir Sapir, the now deceased, colorful 1970s Soviet immigrant. The future president demanded Fuks pay him $20 million to put his name on a Moscow construction project. But the deal collapsed.

As for Sapir, he somehow parlayed employment as a New York City cab driver into becoming a billionaire who bought a $5 million apartment from Trump and lived on a 151-foot mega-yacht decorated in Versace taste. A decade ago, Sapir was convicted of illegally importing rare animal parts such as a Bengal tiger's head, elephant tusks and various other body parts used for decorations.

It's in this fascinating world that Fuks places Rohrabacher, though only perhaps as a would-be chauffeur. According to the new lawsuit over the alleged inauguration rip-off scheme, the congressman was supposed to have picked up Fuks from his Washington, D.C., hotel and driven him to the swearing-in. But neither Rohrabacher nor his car ever appeared. A legitimate explanation for Rohrabacher's laziness or rudeness or both isn't clear.

In other situations, he's been eager to work in the shadows as a go-fer on behalf of warped Russian interests. For example, June 2016 saw the infamous Trump Tower meeting between Donald Trump Jr., Jared Kushner and Manafort with Putin pal-tied Kunat Akhmetshin and Natalia Veselnitskaya, who is now facing obstruction of justice charges. Rohrabacher—who dodged Vietnam War combat duty to smoke pot, party and build his right-wing bonafides—has been pals with Akhmetshin and Veselnitskaya, having both privately dined and socialized with them before promoting a lame pro-Putin propaganda movie

The then-congressman, who ignored FBI cautions that Putin was trying to recruit him, also went out of his way to back Russian spy Maria Butina. After they met in Russia and dined in D.C., he angrily denounced her later arrest, calling it a "bogus" act performed by evil, faceless American law-enforcement agents Rohrabacher's tale would have died its embarrassing death if only Butina hadn't pleaded guilty last year in an illegal campaign to infiltrate conservative political groups such as the NRA. She is currently serving an 18-month prison sentence

While Fuks, who claims he has emails supporting his stance, wants his money back, Vanetik—who has been featured in *Forbes*—told reporters the lawsuit is a "PR stunt," an assertion sure to be tested in our federal courthouse in coming months

As for Rohrabacher—once Orange County's senior career politician—he quickly moved out of state from Costa Mesa after Harley Rouda (D-Laguna Beach) slammed him at the ballot box and is trying to sell his influence, if he has any, in lobbying-type efforts.

We're not sold on the ex-politician's business prowess. He's been living off taxpayers for more than 40 years. Besides, there's no doubting his true specialty: collecting an ever-growing list of convicted-felon buddies

Those ranks now include Butina, the spy with a direct connection to Alexander Torshin, who denies Spanish government claims he has worked for Putin's thugs and, if there's a difference, the Russian mob; influence peddlers Manafort and Jack Abramoff, embezzler Jack Wu, con artist Dave Garofalo, once the mayor of Huntington Beach, dirty ex-sheriff Mike Carona, who spent 66 months in prison; Hollywood swindler Joseph Medawar, who paid the congressman more than $30,000, avid Christian conservative and serial child molester Jeffrey Nielsen, his close D.C. aide; FBI-caught bribe-taking politician Pat Nolan, and, of course, Rhonda Rohrabacher, his wife who found ways to commit state crimes in a campaign.

RSCOTTMOXLEY@OCWEEKLY.COM

» GABRIEL SAN ROMÁN

DICK SLAUGHTER

Galaxy's Edge Traffic Test

Orange County district attorney Todd Spitzer gave a law-and-order lecture in March to go along with loitering charges for 21 arrested protesters, including prominent Democrats, for blocking a busy Anaheim intersection outside the NAMM Convention. Unite Here Local 11 organized the Jan. 24 civil-disobedience action in support of contract campaigns for workers at Anaheim's Sheraton Park and Hilton hotels, which ultimately lifted wages and benefits.

"As the district attorney, I respect the right to protest, but all of us are required to do it in a lawful manner," Spitzer said in a press release. "The right to protest is afforded to everyone; exercising that right does not allow anyone to break the law and bring traffic to a complete standstill."

But Anaheim's Public Works Department and police treated the planned street closures and civil disobedience as a traffic test run for June 24's opening of Star Wars: Galaxy's Edge, which proved surprisingly tame. Documents obtained by the *Weekly* show the Mouse House expressed concerns, but not out of any feared lawlessness. Disneyland had a private party the same day for Albertsons Safeway SoCal Employees Association that started an hour before and wanted to avoid any traffic nightmares.

"Hopefully, all of this is good practice for when Galaxy's Edge opens," Jamie Lai, Anaheim's traffic and transportation manager, wrote to police Sergeant James Griswold via email.

"To mitigate any parking issues due to the protest and special event, I have coordinated with Disney to ask if we can push earlier traffic to Toy Story [parking area] or to utilize Simba [parking lot] in the case that the structure gets backed up," officer David Gonzalez, traffic supervisor, wrote Lai. After speaking with the company, Lai noted that Disney felt comfortable with the plan.

Anaheim police chief Jorge Cisneros gave the final word on the protest: his force had been apprised of by the union in an update to the mayor and City Council the day after. Cisneros wrote that the "impacts of this demonstration to the convention were minimal."

But not too minimal for a Spitzer show trial.

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HeyYou!

» ANONYMOUS

Preying Hands

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You're the older woman wearing a prominent gold cross who gratuitously touched me as I was reaching from my scooter for a box of crackers at a local market. I told you, "Never touch anyone you don't know," and you replied, "I'm a Christian." I don't care if you're Shinto, Buddhist, Tao, Jewish, Bahá'í or flat-out pagan. Don't touch people you don't know. You apparently didn't like me speaking up to you, as you gave me the "Well, I never!" attitude and stalked off. Being "Christian" doesn't give you the right to essentially assault people by touching them when they don't want that. And it *is* assault.

HEY, YOU! Send anonymous thanks, confessions or accusations—changing or deleting the names of the guilty and innocent—to "Hey, You!" c/o *OC Weekly* 18475 Bandilier Circle, Fountain Valley, CA 92708, or email us at letters@ocweekly.com

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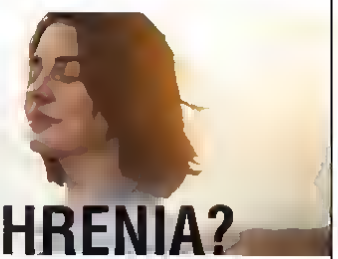

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ASHKAN AND TAHEREH IN HAPPIER TIMES

COUPLE PHOTO PROVIDED BY ASHKAN KESHTMAND

WEDDING BANNED

Trump's Travel Ban against Muslim-majority nations is keeping an Iranian woman separated from her Orange County husband

By Gabriel San Roman

Trapped in a bureaucratic nightmare, Ashkan Keshtmand and Tahereh Fereydouni endure a long-distance relationship, their only reassurance the sound of each other's voice over the phone. Keshtmand, a legal permanent resident from Iran, calls his wife on an early afternoon in Tustin. "Hello, what's going on?" he asks.

"Not much," Fereydouni replies from Tehran, Iran. "Everything's fine."

Keshtmand asks how her parents are doing. Fereydouni is curious about the weather in Southern California. The connection fades in and out at the onset of the conversation, the wifi in Iran is too iffy today for FaceTime to work.

In the past three years, the young Iranian couple have lived a virtual marriage despite long-held plans to start a life and a family in the United States. Keshtmand filed a petition for his wife to be granted an F-2A family-based visa in June 2016, starting the process before becoming entangled in President Donald Trump's Travel Ban proclamation in 2017 that indefinitely suspends the issuance of immigrant and most, if not all, nonimmigrant visas from several Muslim-majority nations, especially Iran.

Wrapping up the conversation with his wife, Keshtmand turns to the Consular Electronic Application Center website to check for any updates on her application before entering a confidential case number. "I know it better than my own name now," he says.

As with numerous previous check-ins, there's no update. When he turns next to checking the website for the U.S. Embassy in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, where his wife did her visa interview in August 2017, the response addressed to her is a familiar one. "Your application for a U.S. immigrant visa is undergoing routine administrative processing. As soon as this processing is completed, the Embassy will post a message to this website with further instructions."

The last update on the case is dated Valentine's Day, Feb. 14, 2018.

"To me, it's like a routine," Keshtmand says with a sigh. "I just wonder when it will be our turn."

A year after the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of a third version of Trump's Travel Ban on June 26, 2018, all Keshtmand and Fereydouni can continue to do is hinge their dreams on waiver provisions that allow for spousal reunification provided there's undue hardship, it's in the nation's best interest and there's no national security threat.

The dilemma that the well-educated Iranian Muslim couple in their early 30s face in the wake of the ban isn't an outlier in OC and Southern California. At the Greater Los Angeles office of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-LA) in Anaheim, married couples often seek help in desperation.

"What I can say with a fair amount of confidence is that the number of calls we've received regarding separation of spouses due to this issue have been fairly

high," says Farida Chehata, immigrants' rights managing attorney at CAIR-LA. "If that's any indication of what's happening nationally, then it's something that's been very detrimental and has actually been a big impact of the Muslim ban."

People also plea for help from Congresswoman Katie Porter. "My office [in Irvine and Washington, D.C.] receives requests for assistance involving the Travel Ban on a weekly basis," says the freshman Democrat.

When Keshtmand reached out, Porter made an official inquiry into Fereydouni's case in April. "Thank you for your April 11, 2019, email regarding the immigrant visa application of Ms. Tahereh Fereydouni," reads a response on behalf of the embassy. "According to our records, the case is undergoing administrative processing in order to qualify for a waiver under Presidential Proclamation 9645."

The couple marked their third wedding anniversary in May the best they could. Given an almost 12-hour difference between Tustin and Tehran, Keshtmand called his wife the day before, when it would be midnight in Iran. He later learned she cried herself to sleep afterward.

Recalling the moment, Keshtmand looks down at the gold wedding band on his ring finger.

"My wife is somebody I love more than anybody in the whole world," he says. "I can't even imagine spending one day without her in my life, even if she's not physically present by my side. That's what makes us strong together. Her patience in this process is evident because a lot of couples may not stay with this."

Serendipitously, Keshtmand's intellectual passions allowed him to encounter the love of his life. Born in India to an educated Iranian family, he became fascinated with the English language at an early age. After earning a degree in agricultural engineering from Azad University in Tehran, he returned to India later in his young life to pursue a master's degree in English.

Before meeting her husband, Fereydouni was focusing on physics and mathematics when her father suggested taking English courses, the advice changed her life in more ways than one. She earned a degree in English literature from Ershad University of Damavand in Tehran, then a master's in the same academic discipline.

The two both worked as tutors in 2008 at the same English institute in Iran. It didn't take long for them to take notice of each other. Keshtmand mustered the courage to ask her out one day, Fereydouni agreed, and the two enjoyed their first date at an upscale Persian buffet in Tehran.

"I fell in love with his personality, character and manners," says Fereydouni. "He was different than other men. Little by little, we got to know each other."

Keshtmand became fond of his wife's warmhearted and empathetic nature. "The things that make her special transcend words," he says.

Soon, they arranged their work schedules so they could see each other as much as possible. After work, the couple continued dating at coffee shops, restaurants and movie theaters, they enjoyed family time at each other's homes. One day in 2015, Keshtmand got down on one knee. The moment took Fereydouni by surprise. "I want to tie your shoes," he teased before proposing. Fereydouni said "yes."

The couple sought to intertwine their future in the U.S., where a few of their relatives lived. "Even before knowing her, my wife read American literature in her leisure time," says Keshtmand.

After being granted an immigrant visa, Keshtmand moved to Irvine in December 2015. He returned to Iran for his May 5 wedding day surrounded by family and friends. By June, Keshtmand had returned to the U.S. and immediately began working on bringing his wife over. At the same time, during the height of the U.S. presidential elections in July of that year, with both major political parties hosting national conventions, the campaign didn't weigh heavily on Keshtmand's mind with regard to the fate of his wife and their newlywed life. "We did everything legally, just like we're supposed to do," says Keshtmand. "I'm a legal permanent resident here petitioning for my wife. I wasn't even aware of the fact that Trump threatened this immigration policy."

What was common knowledge was that Iranians had a difficult vetting process in coming to the U.S. before Trump took power. As a married man, Keshtmand expected to be apart from his wife for about a year as they worked on her F-2A visa. Fereydouni's case officially opened two weeks after Trump won the presidency. Two months later, he signed Executive Order 13769 and strained the newlyweds' plans for a life together in the U.S. Fereydouni completed her visa interview at the embassy on Aug. 7, 2017, and has been in administrative processing since, despite a typical three-to-nine month waiting period after an interview given in the consular office.

"We never imagined that something like this would happen," says Keshtmand. "Every day I talk to my wife, she's literally depressed. I ask her to be patient, but for how long can I tell her that?"

Trump wasted little time flexing his executive muscle at the Department of Defense's Hall of Heroes in Arlington, Virginia, a week after Inauguration Day. Flanked by then-Secretary of Defense James Mattis and Vice President Mike Pence, the President spoke to reporters on Jan. 27, 2017, amid a flurry of shuttering cameras.

"I'm establishing new vetting measures to keep radical Islamic terrorists out of the United States of America," said Trump. "We don't want them here. We only want to admit those into our country who will support our country and love deeply our people."

With that declaration, Trump took a seat at a ceremonial signing desk. He gazed at the folder in his hands before reading aloud, "This is the Protection of the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States. We all know what that means." He uncapped his pen after reading Executive Order 13769's title once more. "That's big stuff," the president remarked before signing his name.

By the stroke of a pen, Trump clamped down on travel from seven Muslim-majority nations: Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. With the order in effect, LAX and other airports around the nation transformed into scenes of chaos and protest that same weekend. For Trump supporters, it appeared to be a step toward fulfilling a campaign promise when he called for a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States" as a presidential candidate.

Critics assailed Trump's Executive Order as a "Muslim Ban" that ran afoul of the U.S. Constitution by prioritizing non-Muslim minorities, a blatant act of religious discrimination. Lawsuits swiftly challenged the ban, leading to revised and narrower versions of it that year, first on March 6 and later on Sept. 24. By the third iteration, Presidential Proclamation 9654, Trump added Venezuela and North Korea to the list of targeted nations while dropping Muslim-majority nations Iraq and Sudan (Trump later removed Chad in 2018). Iran remained, noted as a state sponsor of terrorism that fails to cooperate with the U.S. in identifying security risks and refuses to accept deportees.

The U.S. Supreme Court allowed the Travel Ban to take full effect in December 2017 while reviewing its legal challenges. Then, on June 26, 2018, the Highest Court in the Land affirmed the constitutionality of the ban. Chief Justice John Roberts, in his majority opinion, cited the waiver provision of the proclamation in buttressing its legality.

A year later, Keshtmand clings to the same provision Roberts highlighted, bringing the proclamation up on his smartphone and reading the pertinent parts. "A waiver may be granted only if a foreign national has demonstrated to the consular officer's or CBP official's satisfaction that denying entry would cause the foreign national undue hardship, entry would not pose a threat to the national security or public safety of the United States and entry would be in the national interest."

Keshtmand turns his attention next to circumstances that allow for a waiver from the ban on a case-by-case basis, most important a provision in which a foreign national seeks to visit or reside with a close family member, such as a spouse, who is a citizen, legal permanent resident or otherwise admitted on a valid nonimmigrant visa. It's a provision Fereydouni believes in, too. By those very words alone, she should be by her husband's side.

"Even when the ban came into effect, we thought it'd be okay for us because we are those exceptions," says Fereydouni. "Being separated from my husband—that's the hardship. How do I prove that? We just want to be members of the American community. I'm not any kind of threat."

But the married couple remains 7,600 miles apart from each other.

"They have to deal with these cases because it's under their own law," says Keshtmand. "The problem is that they're not delivering the promise that they made."

Keshtmand and Fereydouni celebrated Valentine's Day virtually last year, as they've done with all special occasions since they married. That same day, instead of a visa, the embassy updated Fereydouni's case after receiving Form DS-5535, Supplemental Questions for Visa Applications—an added layer of "extreme vetting" introduced in 2017. It's another bureaucratic hurdle reaching beyond the countries targeted by Trump's Travel Ban and was well positioned as backup if the Presidential Proclamation had proved unconstitutional.

The State Department proposed the form for visa applicants "who have been determined to warrant additional scrutiny in connection with terrorism or other national security-related visa ineligibilities."

In introducing the new vetting, the State Department noted that only half a percent of applicants present a "threat profile" every year. With the Travel Ban against Iran, Fereydouni had to fill it out. The three-page questionnaire pries into the past 15 years of an applicant's travel, living and employment histories. It also asks for information regarding siblings, children and spouses. Social-media accounts and identities for the past five years must be disclosed.

It's been 16 months since Fereydouni turned in the paperwork and the embassy last provided an update on her case.

The form adds to the distress for those already subject to the Travel Ban. With the Supreme Court upholding the ban's constitutionality, additional legal challenges are now focusing on its waiver provisions, a process plaintiffs accuse the government of offering without any meaningful guidance. Muslim Advocates, a national civil-rights organization, joined an amended complaint last year in *Emami v. Nielsen* alongside several other organizations. The case drew together 36 plaintiffs who've either faced denials of visas or lengthy delays despite leading lives that seemingly make for strong waiver cases.

"There's no application for one of these waivers," says Sirine Shabaya, a Muslim Advocates attorney who's arguing the case in federal court. "The government continually says that people are considered automatically. We've literally never heard of anyone going to an interview and being told they're being granted a waiver."

Then there are cases like Fereydouni's, people who interviewed for a visa before the proclamation took effect. Several plaintiffs in *Emami* can say the same. "The idea that they were consid-

» CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

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WOMAN IN ANAHEIM PROTESTS SCOTUS RULING

GABRIEL SAN ROMAN

WEDDING BANNED

» FROM PAGE 9

ered for a waiver at their interview is, of course, blatantly absurd in that context," Shahaya adds

Since being filed, a few plaintiffs in the case recently received a rare waiver. In April, Reuters reported that in the first 11 months of the Travel Ban, the U.S. government cleared 2,216 applicants for waivers out of nearly 38,000 cases, that's all of 6 percent. "The grant rates by themselves, I don't think, are really dispositive of the claims that we are raising in this case," says Shabaya. "The fact that you only had a 6 percent grant rate when you have potentially thousands of applicants who immediately seem to meet all of the criteria set forth in the proclamation helps to show that this is not a meaningful process."

And the numbers only continue to shrink, especially for Iranians. U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-Maryland) successfully added an amendment to the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2019 that called for 90-day reports on the Travel Ban from the State Department until Sept. 30. The first report came two weeks ago and shows that from December 2017 to March 31, 2019, only 5.1 percent of applicants were cleared for waivers. For Iranians the rate is all but a total clampdown at 1.3 percent, the lowest percentage among all affected countries.

State Department data charts show that in January through March of this year, only a sole applicant for an F-2A visa, such as the one Fereydouni is hoping to be granted, was cleared for a waiver per month. When asked how many applicants had unresolved cases that began prior to the ban, a State Department official replied, "no visas were revoked pursuant to PP 9645."

Frustrated by the lack of progress, Keshtmand reached out to Porter in March. A co-sponsor of the NO BAN Act that seeks to repeal the Travel Ban by disallowing religious discrimination in visa issuance, she was receptive to his plea. "I remain firmly opposed to the Muslim Ban," says Porter. "Policies that discriminate, persecute and divide us go against American and Orange County values."

Porter has to wait until July to be able to submit a follow-up to her April inquiry to see if the case has moved beyond administrative processing. "No individual or family should be discriminated against based on their religious beliefs, and my office will continue to offer assistance to constituents affected by the ban," she says.

On the legislative side, with the Trump administration and Republicans controlling the Senate, political observers don't see much chance for the NO BAN Act to become law any time soon.

"Deep down, I'm losing my hope," Keshtmand admits. "I'm trying to keep a good face in front of my wife, but I don't think they've even touched my wife's case. Everything that we believed in has been proven wrong."

For the past two years, Fereydouni has kept a ritual akin to her husband's. "Every time that I wake up in the morning, the first thing I do is check my phone to see if I have any emails from the embassy or if I've received any calls or messages from Ashkan telling me good news," she says. "This is too painful. We've been married for three years, but we can't even be with each other. We used to see each other every day."

When each morning brings more of the same, Fereydouni faces another difficulty in getting up. She knows she'll face the same question from relatives, friends

and co-workers that she seeks answers to for herself. Fereydouni's father is especially inquisitive of what updates there are for his daughter and son-in-law. But for the past three years, the response hasn't changed. All the couple can do is wait for the process to play out, prompting another question about their patience.

"Ashkan cannot even come here," says Fereydouni. "And I don't have any way to go see him." The couple are leery of anything that may adversely affect their already-tenuous case, including any extended stay in Iran that could be misconstrued as abandonment of Keshtmand's domicile in the U.S.

Kept apart, Keshtmand's spiritual well-being faces a new test. Being referred to an oncologist and living through a cancer scare without Fereydouni by his side is just the latest, deepest pang of solitude. On the morning of an important appointment, his wife is a world away. "Right now, he's at the doctor's office undergoing an MRI," says Fereydouni, engulfed in grief. "I'm just waiting for his call to tell me if everything is okay or not."

A doctor advised Keshtmand to keep monitoring a cyst that could turn cancerous. Such a diagnosis might improve the chances for his wife's case to be dislodged from its seemingly perpetual state of administrative processing. But that's not the way the couple wants Fereydouni to gain clearance for a waiver.

In high-profile visa battles, ill health appears to be a determining factor. Shaima Swileh, a Yemeni mother, publicly pleaded to have her case expedited and was granted a visa just before her 2-year-old, U.S.-citizen son died. "It's sad that it's come to this," says Chehata, "where people have to be suffering to such extremes to even qualify for a simple waiver that they should qualify for if not coming from one of these five Muslim-majority nations." The attorney represented a Yemeni American dentist who, diagnosed with leukemia, needed to fight for banned relatives to be granted a visa; one sister who got a waiver had a 100 percent match for a life-saving bone marrow transplant.

Keshtmand alerted the embassy of his own health concerns, but it didn't appear to move things along.

Despite these dire straits, he carries a spark of hope, one sustained by an ever-enduring love. Visibly frustrated at times, not knowing whether to laugh or cry, Keshtmand becomes buoyant and cracks a boyish grin when musing about the long-awaited moment of reuniting with his wife stateside. "Once I actually pick her up from LAX, I'll take her to Tender Greens, a restaurant in Santa Monica," he says. "Then we would take a walk to Third Street Promenade, and then the Hollywood Boulevard Walk of Fame."

Fereydouni's fixated on a more immediate scene—their loving embrace at the airport.

From there, the plans for the married couple remain as they've been rehearsed in conversation for years. They want to travel to Las Vegas and New York City within their new home country. Fereydouni says her husband hasn't really gone anywhere in the U.S. because he doesn't want to explore or experience anything here without her.

Both want to continue their education, Keshtmand is pondering law school, and Fereydouni wants to pursue a doctorate in English.

Most of all, they want to start a family in building their lives together in OC.

"When we think of such things, we get excited," says Keshtmand. "We have a lot of plans, but unfortunately, we don't know when they will come true."

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fri/06/28

[CONCERT]

Piece of Her Heart

Kozmic Blues—Janis Joplin Tribute

Though Janis Joplin has been dead for nearly 50 years, her spirit endures via her songs. Kozmic Blues is a tribute band in sound as well as name, which they took from a Joplin tune. Michelle Rohl channels the big-voiced singer as she leads an eight-piece band, her fiery style earning plaudits for taking on Joplin. Tonight's show is complete with video and a performance that harkens back to the Summer of Love. Though she'll never be duplicated, this is as close as you'll get to seeing Joplin live, which makes this show worth checking out.

Kozmic Blues—Janis Joplin Tribute at the Coach House, 33157 Camino Capistrano, San Juan Capistrano, (949) 496-8930, thecoachhouse.com. 8 p.m. $20.
—WYOMING REYNOLDS

[THEATER]

Lingua Franca

La Cage Aux Folles

"The Cage of Madwomen" is a rough translation of the title of the iconic 1977 French play that was made into two French films, a musical and *The Birdcage*. All were hits, a credit to their shared premise and, as regards to the award-winning musical now at the Long Beach Playhouse, book author and actor Harvey Fierstein and songwriter Jerry Herman (*Hello, Dolly!*). This farcical story set in a drag club still joyfully celebrates identity and political resistance, and with "I Am What I Am" and other musical show stoppers, the world has caught up, caught on and now sings along.

La Cage Aux Folles at Long Beach Playhouse, 5021 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach, (562) 494-1014, www.lbplayhouse.org. 8 p.m. Through Aug. 3. $10–$24.
—ANDREW TONKOVICH

sat/06/29

[FOOD & DRINK]

PARTY IN THE USA

(Almost) Fourth of July Party

Fourth of July falls on a weekday this year, so if you'd rather get hammered for the red, white and blue while having a buffer day to recover, Golden Road bartenders will pour refreshing brews as well as beer slushes for today's Second Annual (Almost) Fourth of July Party. A dollar from each IPA sale goes toward the Fisher House Foundation, which builds housing for military veterans and their families. Other fun activities include a slow bike race and live music. Come ride your bike real slow and drink icy beers for 'Murica!

Second Annual (Almost) Fourth of July Party at Golden Road Pub, 2210 E. Orangewood Ave., Anaheim, (714) 312-4015; goldenroad.la/anaheim. 1 p.m. —Aimee Murillo

[FESTIVALS]

Bloody Pirates!

Pirate Invasion Long Beach

Some of us can't get enough historical re-enactments, with their opportunities to experience a different century. A Wild West ghost-town event? Love it. Renaissance Fair? Sign us up. And this weekend's Pirate Invasion similarly sends you back in time. Board three different pirate ships built to historical accuracy; witness sword fights and cannon battles; participate in a treasure hunt; check out the living-history encampment; and let the little ones frolic in the kids' zone, with so activity center and a live production of *Treasure Island*. Even better, there's a mermaid-themed village, and the King and Queen of Spain make a guest appearance. Get those waistcoats pressed and ready, ye scabber's dogs, for the ultimate immersive history lesson!

Pirate Invasion Long Beach at Shoreline Aquatic Park, 200 Aquarium Way, Long Beach; www.pirateinvasionlongbeach.com. 10 a.m., also Sun. Free.
—AIMEE MURILLO

sun/06/30

[ART]

An Artsy Affair

Sawdust Art Festival

For the 53rd year, Laguna Beach will be ground zero for this grand bub of artistic activity. Located at the festival's now-permanent residence, Sawdust provides a wellspring of arts-and-crafts activities and showcases. Accompanying the work of 200 featured artists, there will be three stages of live music and entertainment, art classes and demonstrations, and, of course, eateries and craft beer and wine. Situated in a 3-acre eucalyptus grove, this hand-built village is a time-honored tradition for Orange Countians, but if you can't make it to opening weekend, don't fret: The festival will keep rocking until September.

Sawdust Art Festival at the Sawdust, 935 Laguna Canyon Rd., Laguna Beach, (949) 494-3030, sawdustartfestival.org. 10 a.m. Through Sept. 1. $4-$9.
—SCOTT FEINBLATT

[PERFORMING ARTS]

Gay Anthems

Songs of Stonewall

Rounding out the festivities for Pride Month, Cal State Long Beach's University Players commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, which served as a flashpoint in LGBTQ history. The Stonewall Inn was ground zero in the fight for queer rights and visibility thereafter, and its old jukebox filled with hitmakers of the day is considered a time capsule of the moment. Join the South Coast Chorale, a big band and some of Long Beach's most popular drag queens as they perform some of those timeless hits, including the Fifth Dimension's "Aquarius," Barbra Streisand's "Before the Parade Passes You By," Shirley Bassey's "This Is My Life," and "You Came, You Saw, You Conquered" by Ronnie Spector and the Ronettes, among others. Songs of Stonewall at University Theater, Cal State Long Beach, 1250 N. Bellflower Blvd., Long Beach, www.sccs-ingers.com. 2:30 p.m. $35-$50. —SR DAVIES

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mon/07/01

[CONCERT]

Digital Wizard

Jay Electronica

Jay Electronica has long been a favorite of rap critics, bloggers and fellow rappers. In 2007, he shared *Act I: Eternal Sunshine (The Pledge)*, originally released on MySpace (RIP). Since then, he's picked up even more fans as his creative output moves at a judicious pace. His much-ballyhooed *Act 2: Patents of Nobility (The Turn)* has been considered the *Chinese Democracy* of hip-hop, as it was supposed to be released on Christmas Day 2007, but has yet to be seen. Despite that, the 42-year-old remains a favorite and continues to perform.

Jay Electronica at the Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600, www.observatoryoc.com. 8 p.m. $10-$20.
—WYOMING REYNOLDS

tue/07/02

[AMUSEMENT PARKS]

Back In the Saddle

Ghost Town Alive!

The classic Calico western experience is back! This much-beloved attraction features a bevy of interesting characters including cowboys, sheriffs, bandits and other miscreants who will take over the entire Knott's Berry Farm theme park this summer. But instead of simply interacting with one another—which they will, as they re-enact bank robberies, hoedowns and other markers of Wild West life—they'll interact with you, too, as visitors are granted special tasks that could earn them the distinction of being an honorary citizen of Calico.

Ghost Town Alive! at Knott's Berry Farm, 8039 Beach Blvd., Buena Park, (714) 220-5200; www.knotts.com. 10 a.m. Through Sept. 2. $53-$115. —AIMEE MURILLO

wed/07/03

[ART]

FEAST YOUR EYES

'Blah Blah Cloudmachine'

As far as local artists go, Dave Van Patten is a rock star, with multiple murals of his gracing the walls of Long Beach establishments. So trusted is his fine taste in illustrators that he's curated this month's MADE By Millworks exhibit. Among our favorites are Ruth Mora, a.k.a. Maan Machine, whose bold, thick-lined rebels are inspired by punk-rock icons and girl groups; Rob Corradetti, with his LSD-soaked psychedelic drawings; Luke Pelleter, whose colorful, conceptual art borders on lurid mayhem; and Siobhan Gallagher, a self-proclaimed zine queen and artist whose cheery style finds humor and lightness and femininity. Bottom line, this exhibit's lineup is stacked with global talent, and you'd be a fool to miss it.

"Blah Blah Cloudmachine" at MADE By Millworks, 240 Pine Ave., Long Beach, (562) 584-6233, www.facebook.com/madebymillworks. 10 a.m. Through July 7. Free.

—AIMEE MURILLO

[CONCERT]

Evil Among Us

Them Evils

Las Vegas natives Them Evils have had an interesting travel trajectory, which has had a major influence on their music. The trio soaked up the glitz and sleaze of Sin City and used it to inspire their trashy rock & roll sound. They then moved to Hollywood and imbibed the sights and sounds of the Sunset Strip, further emboldening their riff-heavy rock tunes. Now residing in Orange County, the crew have brushed up on local punk history and infused it within their own frenetic sensibilities. Get a taste of what they're serving at tonight's pre-holiday show with fellow OC rockers Desert of Talking Shadows, the Gringoz and Dead Poet Society.

Them Evils at the Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0039; www.wayfarercm.com. 8 p.m. $10-$12. 21+.

—AIMEE MURILLO

thu/07/04

[HOLIDAY]

Smoke On the Water

Fourth of July Fireworks Cruise

If you're down in South County and still functioning after whatever day-drinking barbecue event you've planned this Fourth of July, definitely buy tickets to this. The Ocean Institute in Dana Point is hosting a sunset cruise aboard the *R/V Sea Explorer*, from which guests will have *the most* spectacular views of the holiday's firework displays over the glassy Pacific. Plus, there's wine, beer and light snacks—that is, if you haven't overdone it on the hot dogs and hard seltzers by nightfall. Reserve your spot as soon as possible because this event is in serious danger of selling out.

Fourth of July Fireworks Cruise at Ocean Institute, 24200 Dana Point Harbor Dr., Dana Point, (949) 496-2274; www.ocean-institute.org. 7:30 p.m. $50-$65.

—ERIN DEWITT

[HOLIDAY]

HOLIDAY IN THE SUN

Huntington Beach Fourth of July Parade and Celebration

Lovers of cherished tradition and family-friendly spectacle will adore this timeless celebration that has been a part of the city for 115 years. The event boasts a cavalcade of notable names for its parade guests, including Lorenzo Lamas as Grand Marshal, Tim Conway Jr., Lynette Romero, Joanie Sprague and Minnie Mouse acting as Children's Grand Marshal. The day begins early with a pancake breakfast at Lake Park, and later, live entertainment takes place on Pier Plaza. Late in the evening at Huntington Beach Pier, resplendent fireworks will descend on the ocean horizon. The fun and enjoyment lasts throughout the weekend, so grab the sunscreen for this ultimate party by the seal.

Huntington Beach Fourth of July Parade and Celebration at Main Street and Pacific Coast Highway, Huntington Beach, www.bb4thofjuly.org. 7 a.m. Through July 6. Free. —AIMEE MURILLO

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EDWIN GOEI

King Creole

Saturday nights at Gram's Kitchen in La Palma is a rousing good time

BY EDWIN GOEI

It's Saturday night, and you're in a mini-mall parking lot in La Palma, a city you never thought you'd be in for anything, let alone an evening out on the town. This is OC's smallest city by size, after all—a blip on the GPS between Buena Park and Cerritos. You see a printing shop, a dry cleaner and a State Farm agent, all closed up for the night. But as you approach Gram's Kitchen, the new Creole restaurant that took the space of a failed build-your-own-poke-bowl shop, you hear not only signs of life, but also boisterous live music pouring from the open doors.

Walking in, you see the band—a bassist, a singer and a saxophonist—have the entire restaurant on their feet, clapping and singing along to "My Girl." It's infectious. Although you haven't been seated, you can't help but belt out the chorus with the crowd.

Before the next verse, your waiter, a charming guy in dreadlocks named Jordan, bounds out to greet you. He sets up the very last available table for you and your date. As you follow him, you notice that your fellow revelers are made up of every ethnicity. The diversity is also reflected in the wait staff and the band members. You see all ages and colors—black, Asian, white and everything in between. And everyone, from the grandmas to the bros, are having a good time.

To commemorate the moment, your date decides she wants a selfie. You oblige her, but to get a wider angle and capture the energy of the place, you decide to set the camera up awkwardly on the edge of the table and turn on the timer. The group of older ladies at the next table sees your lame attempt and takes pity; one of them offers to take the picture for you. She does, and you thank her profusely.

Jordan returns with glasses of sweet tea, the brim caked with sugar. He recites the specials, which include a fried catfish with red beans and rice that you immediately know you want. You order it, as well as the shrimp and grits. The band finish a rousing rendition of Earth, Wind & Fire's "September," then the saxophonist announces to the crowd that their CDs are free for the taking.

Between sips of that delightful tea and anticipating the next song, you munch on your first appetizer: a platter of crisply fried okra dipped in a tangy sauce that's most likely a remoulade. It's addictive. You nearly finish the tray before you move on to the handmade crawfish cake that's just arrived. With chunks of the shellfish embedded in cornmeal, it eats like a hush puppy but looks like a fried green tomato. You've never seen the likes of it anywhere else, even in New Orleans. But they're delicious, especially with the salad of greens, red onions and cherry tomatoes they're paired with.

Before long, Jordan (who also turns out to be one of the owners) brings out the catfish entrée. It includes a steaming dome of rice surrounded by an ocean of red beans that, with its pieces of Andouille sausage, is already a meal unto itself. But on top of it all is that catfish, a massive filet cocooned in a cornmeal coating that's not only crunchy, but also so well-seasoned you don't end up using the wedge of lemon he gives you. Breaking into the crust, the flesh is so melty and creamy it's like soft serve.

The portions are also generous, as if there's actually a grandma in the kitchen who wants to fatten you up. Despite being full, you are duty-bound to at least take a forkful of the shrimp and grits. You make sure to sample a little of everything with the grits, including the spicy sausage, the shrimp and the bacon. Your eyes roll to the back of your head as you taste them. You go in for a second forkful, and by the third, the heat of the cayenne has radiated to your face, making it tingly and warm. When the saxophonist calls for the crowd to give the chef a round of applause, you clap the hardest.

To close out the night, you order a classic banana pudding with whipped cream and Nilla Wafers, but your date has other ideas. Cued by the baseline for "Blurred Lines," she convinces two of the older ladies to go up and dance with her. Before long, she and nearly a third of the customers are stepping it to the "Cupid Shuffle." The chef comes out to immortalize the scene on his phone. You do, too.

You watch in amazement as everything—the comforting food, the warm service, the inclusivity of the crowd, the live music—culminated into this magical moment ... in La Palma, of all places.

GRAM'S KITCHEN

12 Centerpointe Dr., Ste. 106, La Palma, (657) 255-4036, www.gramskitchenlapalma.com. Open Tues.-Thurs., 10 a.m.-9 p.m.; Fri., 10 a.m.-10 p.m.; Sat., 8 a.m.-10 p.m.; Sun., 8 a.m.-3 p.m. Entrees, $14-$18. Beer and wine.

WHAT THE ALE

» GREG NAGEL

Mixing Palates With Palettes

If there's one thing art school taught me, it's how to appreciate a well-crafted beer. Back in the day, when I was on a student-artist budget, beer money came mostly from selling used CDs. The random 40-ounce swill we would drink on sale would always finish with a Jackson Pollock shudder.

These days, beer and art collide at local breweries on a regular basis. The entry fee to a Craft and Arts event includes a beer of your choice, and there are enough art materials to portray Bob Ross' Afro as though it were Godzilla. Seriously, someone should paint that.

Craft and Arts is perfect for a date night or just a chill hang with friends. "People tend to get inspiration by talking to people and looking at shit," notes founder Chris Kent as he guides us through a session. Surprisingly, his spiel about describing the beer you order and tying that to describing a piece of art you might like is something I hadn't thought of, but it works perfectly.

As it turns out, art and beer are super subjective. The beauty of this realization is it can help kick-start the creative process, which happens quickly at our event. Some go straight for mixed-media paint complementing magazine cut outs. Others go for bold statements with words. I stuck to my beer description, which happened to be an Asylum Pale Ale, that went down this weird pine and citrus–inspired path. What came out in the end was a statement on Donald Trump's environmental policy.

It's not what was planned, but that's where the process took me.

LETTERS@OCWEEKLY.COM

For more information on Craft and Arts, visit www.facebook.com/CRAFTbeerARTSncrafts.

GREG NAGEL

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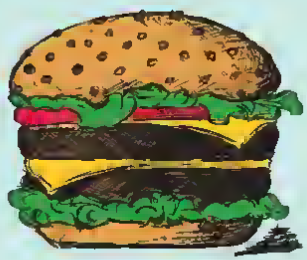

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ERIN DEWITT

Treat Yo Self

We're all screaming for Hug Life ice cream

LONG BEACH LUNCH
» ERIN DEWITT

Of all the culinary movements flocking to Long Beach over the last few years, the vegan takeover may be the most appreciated (by us, anyway). And carrying on this plant-based sweep is Hug Life, the OC-based ice cream and dessert shop. With two busy locations already in Garden Grove and Orange, Hug Life's newest spot, on 4th Street (where Do Good Donuts used to be), opened just a few weeks ago.

Johny Tran, the "main owner" as he calls himself, says, "We were able to open within a month of signing papers since it used to be a doughnut and soft-serve place. Long Beach has always been a location we wanted but we never found the right space, so when this opportunity presented itself, it was too perfect to pass up."

The dessert parlor (full name: Hug Life Anti-Dairy Ice Cream n Stuff) may be led by Tran, but this is a cooperative effort. As the shop's bio states, "Hug Life was conceived by a close-knit group of friends who had a plant-based lifestyle and listened to a lot of hip-hop."

Hug Life promises to be organic, and always powered by plants. Of their 16 ice cream flavors, some stand-out options are the Banana Boy, with bananas, roasted walnuts, cookie bits and cinnamon, and the Mango Chamoy, a sweet-tart mango juice base with red chamoy sauce and Tajin.

Diehards should note that the popular Sesame Street (roasted black sesame with activated charcoal and dark chocolate) remains exclusive to OC locations (for now). But they've got all the classics, such as vanilla bean, cookies and cream, rocky road, and strawberry. Plus, the majority of their flavors are both gluten- and nut-free.

And yes, it's actually really, really good. Vegan ice cream (we're not talking sorbet) has just recently found its stride. Trying to replicate a cream-and-eggs recipe with plant substitutes sometimes led to an icy, chalky mess. But Hug Life's version has nailed the perfect balance of sweet, velvety and rich.

"First-time customers tend to be conflicted with what flavor to go with," says Tran. "So we definitely suggest getting our Hug-a-Bowl, which is three mini scoops of any of our flavors. And it comes with a complimentary dry topping and drizzle, all in a chocolate-dipped waffle bowl." Drizzles can be chocolate, caramel or condensed coconut milk; dry toppings can include sprinkles or cinnamon-toast cereal, among many more choices.

But if the Hug-a-Bowl sounds a little daunting (and it is pretty hefty), try the Ice Cream Sammich: two thick, soft, just a little crumbly, chocolate chip cookies encasing a thick slab of your choice of ice cream.

If you're feeling nostalgic, they've got a root beer float made with Virgil's Natural Root Beer and a scoop of your preferred flavor, which should obviously be vanilla bean, come on!

"We make our ice cream in our shops," says Tran of his decadent frozen treats. "As a team we decide what flavors to make, and sometimes we even ask customers for suggestions.

"We definitely are always working on expanding and spreading our ice cream to different cities so everyone of all diets can enjoy," continues Tran. And really, it's true of the vegan ice cream trend as a whole. "We want to make our ice cream more accessible to everyone."

HUG LIFE
2707 W. 4th St., Long Beach,
www.huglifeicecream.com

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GREG NAGEL

Instant Classic

Fable & Spirit offers haute takes on gastro fare

On the west coast of Ireland lies the iconic Cliffs of Mober, where a troubled sea crashes wildly into the tall edge of the Emerald Isle in the most beautiful way. If you ever visit, you'll reach a fence saying "Private Property, no trespassing," and be tempted to not go any farther. Yet, just to the left of the sign, there's a permanent trail dug in by thousands of adventurous people willing to pay whatever fine there might be to absorb the absolute finest view Ireland has to offer.

After getting back from a trip to Ireland, you may find yourself hitting the equivalent of that trespassing sign at the average American Irish-style pub, where adventuring past cliché dishes and sad Guinness pours are what would make Saint Patrick cry green Bud Light tears to eternity.

That is, until I stepped into Fable & Spirit, a brand-new eatery in Newport's hip Lido Village, where a mere 10 steps into their dining room I felt like I'd hiked to the end of the Cliffs of Moher trail. Was it the big gold Dublin-style front door I just walked through? Or maybe the huge smile and wave across the room from a bartender I've never met? The vibe here instantly brought me back to those back-country rural Irish pubs where you're greeted by a charming family that runs the place—you know, where the dad is behind the bar pouring pints, mom is serving pub snacks, and the kids are ripping a trad sesh on the fiddle and squeeze-box as a few locals slap their knees to the beat, smiling squint-eyed.

Fable & Spirit has this in aces, and is easily the only spot in Newport where the publicans are akin to the culinary version of Pixar's Incredibles. Mom Jean and dad Darren Coyle, who also run Dublin 4 Gastropub and Wineworks for Everyone, are behind this new spot. Son Drew is behind the bar with an inspired bar menu worthy of bartender of the year, and daughter Ali, who is a musician in her own right, curates the wine list with her mad multi-level sommelier skills.

Chef David Shofner, who is a dead-ringer for a young Jim "Reverend Horton" Heath, can be seen just beyond the dining room with his sick sideburns, sizzling his menu in the windowed kitchen. Not only does his food pay homage to true gastro-Irish fare, it goes a bike beyond what I'd expect for Newport, or even Orange County, with new spins on age-old classics such as a hard-to-find prime rib cap steak, roasted rabbit fricassee, or the highly recommended short rib with plump morels and purple fingerling potatoes that have been butter-poached and porchetta-drizzled to achieve maximum unctuousness.

Maybe it's the cocktail menu that works in mythological whimsy with dashes of Italian Amari, or perhaps the taps of all local craft beer—aside from a Fergal Murray-approved Guinness draught pour—or the wine cuvenee stocked with a grape geek's cellar. I pinched myself sitting at the bar. Fable & Spirit is an instant classic.

FABLE & SPIRIT
3441 Via Lido, Newport Beach, (949) 409-9913; www.fableandspirit.com

EAT & DRINK THIS NOW

» GREG NAGEL

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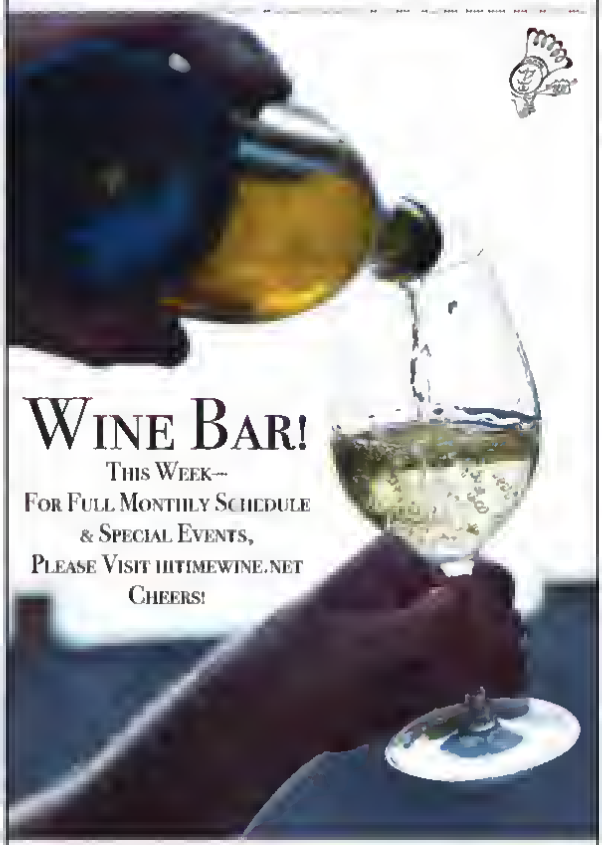

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What white wines will Gary select? Blanc bottles from **Burgundy, Loire, Alsace, Bordeaux** and **Rhône**? No idea! But, we know they will be delicious and ideal for warmer weather. $30

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Our last Oregon tasting was a huge success, so we're doing it again (albeit with different wines)! Join us as we **taste new releases** from Big Table Farm, Brick House, Gran Moraine, Beaux Freres and more! $35

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LEAVING A ONE-STAR REVIEW

SHUDDER, DIGITAL ARTIFACTS

Horrorbnb

Head Count is a disappointing case of cabin fever

BY AIMEE MURILLO

Elle Callahan's *Head Count* is a supernatural thriller that dips into occult territory and folklore. The threat in question is a fake mythological creature called a Hisji that shape-shifts into the form of someone else when there are five people around. It is a vengeful, malevolent creature that will possess the bodies of those in its path and coerce each one to commit suicide. This is all we as the audience know about the creature, and it is foretold to us in an opening text poem that aims to spook us like the type of refrains repeated in *The Babadook* or *Candyman*.

I've read comparisons to *The Thing* and *It Follows* for *Head Count*, but they only apply thematically. *Head Count* seems bereft of the same ingenuity as those films and operates more on familiar tropes and anticlimactic thrills that render the overall product forgettable.

Taking place in a remote house in Joshua Tree, the film clearly vies for psychological scares as the Hisji slowly and subtly starts freaking out and raising suspicions among the house guests. Now, I love a slow burn to the scares as much as any horror-film viewer, but the freaky stuff is too few and far between. Worse still, *Head Count* operates on conventions of psychological thrillers and horror films but doesn't gain traction as either; in other words, you've seen multiple movies like this one, so it relies on what you know from those flicks to fill in the blanks here.

The film begins with collegiate protagonist Evan (Isaac Jay) dropping his friends off at LAX for spring break. He's disappointed to not be joining them, instead, he is headed to Joshua Tree to visit his off-the-grid, spiritually enlightened brother, Peyton (Conner Rowe), and stay with him in his shabby trailer. It's never clear why Evan doesn't have the option to join his friends, but presumably he goes to dutifully build on the existing bond he has with Peyton, as he is his only living relative left since their mother and father passed away years ago. While on a hike, they meet a group of friends vacationing in a remote Airbnb—among them pretty photographer Zoe (Ashleigh Morghan), who catches Evan's eye. The group invites the brothers to a party at their rented hub, but only Evan wants to join, so he ditches Peyton to hang out with the gang in hopes of hooking up with Zoe.

The vacationers later revel in telling ghost stories late at night around a campfire. Evan gets a turn, and after scouring Anonymous Nightmares, a Creepypasta-type website of amateur horror stories, he comes across the poem about the Hisji. Reading aloud the poem and saying its name five times, he inadvertently conjures up the creature and sets it loose on the partiers.

Some positive things of note: The sound design is phenomenal, and along with the unblinking camera, that provides a genuine sense of unease; the familiar is made unfamiliar and the serene is made to seem creepy. Visual tricks, whenever they occur, play really well and drum up frightful tension. The film is also well-cast: Jay holds his own as the straight man sensing the dangers first and trying to save everyone from it (we even get the typical researching-the-creature-online-and-discovering-a-lost-case-file scene). Morghan has a wonderful presence, so it would have been great if she were as involved with the saving as Jay.

What was frustrating about *Head Count* was not knowing what it aimed to be. Or rather, it knows what it aims to be, but the film thinks it's more clever than it is by flirting with genre conventions to buck viewer expectations. The group dynamic is never fully explored beyond knowing who's dating who and noting the archetypal characters you're likely acquainted with in slasher films: the dominant jock who huffs at superstition, the sexually uninhibited bestie, the comic relief/druggie. Some characters will never speak a line, so their eventual demise is met with a shrug.

As a directorial debut, *Head Count* feels extremely flat, though Callahan (who co-wrote the film with Michael Nader) is definitely adept at crafting atmosphere and mood. But a viewer can only sit through atmosphere and mood for so long during a 90-minute film. Feel free to check out early.

AMURILLO@OCWEEKLY.COM

HEAD COUNT

was directed by Elle Callahan, written by Elle Callahan and Michael Nader, and stars Isaac Jay, Ashleigh Morghan and Bevin Bru

I Detest this Place Like a Sickness

BY MATT COKER

40 ACRES & A MULE FILMWORKS

The Fall of the American Empire. A shy and insecure delivery truck driver tries to dispose of bags of cash he picked up at a crime scene. In French with English subtitles. *UA Long Beach 6, (844) 462-7342. Thurs., June 27, 12:30, 3:45 & 7 p.m. $10.05-$12.95.*

Pavarotti. This new documentary on the legendary opera singer includes intimate interviews, historic performances and never-before-seen footage. *UA Long Beach 6, (844) 462-7342. Thurs., June 27, 1, 4:15 & 7:30 p.m. $10.05-$12.95.*

Predator. A team of commandos are hunted by an extra-terrestrial in a Central American jungle. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Thurs., June 27, 2:30, 6 & 8:30 p.m., Fri., 2, 5 & 7:30 p.m., Sat., 7:30 p.m. $7-$10.50.*

Flax to Fire. The life and work of elite Iranian industrialist and entrepreneur Aliasghar Hajibaba is screened. *UC Irvine, (949) 824-6117. Thurs., June 27, 6:30 p.m. Free, but you must RSVP at bit.ly/2Xntryp.*

Our Time Machine. When 43-year-old Chinese conceptual artist Malei-onn's father, former Shanghai Chinese Opera Theater artistic director Ma Ke, is diagnosed with Alzheimer's, he pours everything into *Papa's Time Machine*, an ambitious new theater project. *OCMAExpand, www.ocmaexpand.org. Thurs., June 27, 7 p.m. Free, but due to limited seating, RSVP to info@ocma.net.*

Ghostbusters. Paranormal scientists (Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis) luck out of their university gigs and into an in-demand ghost-eradication business as New York City is gripped by untold evil. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Thurs., June 27, 7:30 p.m. Call for ticket prices.*

Terminator 2: Judgment Day. A new cyborg (Arnold Schwarzenegger), who is identical to the one who tried to kill Sarah Connor (Linda Hamilton), attempts to protect her young son John (Edward Furlong). *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Fri., 2:30, 5:30 & 8:30 p.m. $7-$10.50.*

Thor. Powerful but arrogant god Thor (Chris Hemsworth) is cast out of Asgard to live among the humans on Earth. *Craig Regional Park, (714) 973-3180. Fri., 6 p.m. Free.*

Mantra: Sounds Into Silence. This feature-length documentary explores the new music and social phenomenon of chanting. *Yogalution Movement, (562) 230-5545. Fri., 7 p.m. $10.*

Battle Royale. In Kinji Fukasaku's 2000 sci-fi adventure that's set in the future, the Japanese government captures ninth-graders and makes them kill one another. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Fri.-Sat., 10 p.m., Sun., 8 p.m. $7 $10.50.*

Kinky Boots the Musical. Factory owner Charlie (Killian Donnelly) and fabulous entertainer Lola (Matt Henry) embrace their differences to create a line of sturdy stilettos. *Various theaters; www.fathomevents.com. Sat., 12:55 p.m. 12.55 p.m. $18.*

1776. Just in time for Independence Day is Peter H. Hunt's 1972 family musical that retells the American Revolution's political struggle in the Continental Congress. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Sat., 4 p.m. $7-$10.50.*

Nightmare On Elm Street 2: Freddy's Revenge. A teenager (Mark Patton) is haunted in his dreams by deceased child murderer Freddy Krueger, who seeks to possess the boy. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Sat., 7 p.m. $15.*

A Dog's Way Home. A dog travels through the Colorado wilderness in search of her owner. *Orange County Great Park, (866) 829-3829. Sat., 8:15 p.m. Free.*

High School Musical. A popular high school basketball player (Zac Efron) and an academic all-star (Vanessa Hudgens) land roles in the high school musical while forming a friendship that threatens the social hierarchy on campus. *Newport Dunes Waterfront Resort and Marina, (949) 729-3863. Sat., dusk. Free but there is a fee to park.*

The Rocky Horror Picture Show. Live shadow-cast troupe Midnight Insanity performs. *Art Theatre, 2025 E. Fourth St., Long Beach, (562) 438-5435, arttheatrelongbeach.org. Sat., 11:55 p.m. $9-$12.*

Do the Right Thing. The 1989 Spike Lee Joint has the filmmaker playing Mookie, a young pizza deliveryman who tries to hold together himself and his mixed race, Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood on a broiling Brooklyn day. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Sun., noon, 2:30, 5:30 & 8 p.m. $7-$10.50.*

The Italian Job. In this 1969 version, Charlie Croker (Michael Caine) leads a plot to steal a gold shipment from the streets of Turin by creating a traffic jam. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Mon.-Tues., 2, 4, 6 & 8:30 p.m. $7-$10.50.*

Jaws. An enormous, man-eating great white shark terrorizes beachgoers on Amity Island. *The Frida Cinema, thefridacinema.org. Mon.-Wed., 2:30, 5:30 & 8 p.m., Thurs., July 4, noon. $7-$10.50; also at Directors Cut Cinema at Regency Rancho Niguel, (949) 831-0446. Tues., 7:30 p.m. $8.*

Playing With Fire: The Documentary. The radical subculture FIRE embraces frugality and financial optimization to achieve independence. *Art Theatre, arttheatrelongbeach.org. Mon., 7:30 p.m. $11.*

Midsummar. A young American couple and friends go to a midsummer festival in a remote Swedish village where a carefree holiday takes a sinister turn. *Starlight Cinema City, (714) 970-6700; Starlight Triangle Cinemas, (714) 650-4300, starlightcinemas.com. Tues., 7 & 10:10 p.m., Wed.-Thurs., July 4, 10:45 a.m., 1:45, 4:45, 7:45 & 10:45 p.m. $6-$12.*

Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix. In David Yates' 2007 franchise flick, Harry (Daniel Radcliffe) and Dumbledore are targeted by the Wizard authorities as an authoritarian bureaucrat slowly seizes power at Hogwarts. *Regency South Coast Village, (714) 557-5701. Wed., 7:30 p.m. $9.*

MCOKER@OCWEEKLY.COM

Golden Slate

'Visual Conversations,' 'two*cubed' and 'Made in California'

BY DAVE BARTON

Portraits are de rigueur at Q Art Salon, especially nude ones, and I have to say I'm more than a little bored seeing yet another human being stripped of their clothes. In "Visual Conversations," an exhibition of Laguna College of Art + Design's 2019 MFA grads, there's plenty of skin and plenty of portraits, but of the 10 artists involved, there are three that stand out even when tackling either of those clichés. William Neukomm, Catherine Kaleel and Gavin Gardner steal the show, with Gardner the double threat as both painter and relief sculptor.

Painting on bronze, Gardner's 2D works are magical, the sculpted children in two of them—*The Little Warrior* and *Mia And The Stereoscope*—extending from their backgrounds, shaded in life-like tones and lived-in colors. Kaleel's silky miniature nude females posed next to foodstuffs are menaced by the serrated edges of opened cans (*Tuna*), the sharp blades of knives (*Chili*) or cats eyeing them hungrily (*Toast*). They don't look like they're aware or fearful of their potential consumption, the casual nudity providing them an unexpected strength. Neukomm masters a variety of styles and I'd be hard-pressed to dislike any of them. There's the outlined style of old comics (*Dress Up*), understated surreality (*Nothing Ever Happens*), whimsy (*The Hurricane Hour*) or Wyatt-esque (*Before the Storm*), one looking like the voyeuristic moment just before Carrie White steps into the shower (*Growing Pains*), or one evoking the Day-Glo beauty of a boy watching other kids playing a game he hasn't been invited to in *Halcyon Estates* (*Playtime*).

CHILI

COURTESY OF CATHERINE KALEEL

Next door at Orange County Center for Contemporary Art (OCCCA) is "two*cubed," work by two more California artists: David Michael Lee and Beverly Jacobs. Lee's paintings work on a variety of levels: as obsessive abstracts inspired by the boatyard near his studio in Catalina, as blocks of primary color floating in a sea of teal, representations of the island he lives on; as geometric sex ... all those rainbow shafts piercing the cubes and spurting colors (*Pre-Pleasure Cubes*), or from a deeper psychological perspective, the workaday trials and tribulations of life stacking up, some floating at each other, suggesting potential future collision (*Cubes-Passing at Night*).

The precarious safety of shelter—that it can be taken away from you in a blink—is at the heart of the tiny naive ceramic houses Jacobs makes. Some are fanciful, referencing conformity, houses of cards and the fable of "The Three Little Pigs," the on-the-nose music playing overhead adding a tongue-in-cheek soundtrack to the viewing, while those in the main gallery are thoughtfully political, tackling segregation, poverty, class (the witty *The 1%*), that ubiquitous Trumpian wall, gentrification (*Black, White and Red 1*, with its white housing pushing black houses off the black "land" they're on, leaving them broken and in pieces), and literally being "underwater" on your mortgage (*Going, Going ...*). Though there are delights from both artists—Jacobs' food for thought and Lee's dazzling 18 acrylic canvas *Study for Cubes* (the least polished and most alive work of the exhibition)—in the end, the sheer number of pieces and obsessive repetition in both cases are simply too much of a good thing.

In Brea Art Gallery's 34th annual "Made in California," gallery director Heather Bowling and her jury have gathered 60+ artists into a cohesive embarrassment of riches. Top pick is the humanity of Daniela Garcia's painting *Ofrenda de Fronteras*, its image of two boys asleep at a detention center amid an overflow of marigold, a delicate Dia de los Muertos symbol of hope that the boys find their way home. There's also hope in Michael Roman's intricate charcoal over pen and ink *B-Boy as Pantokrator #HipHopCanSaveMyLife*, its iconography transforming the young black subject into a Christian saint. Stacie Jaye Meyer captivatingly deconstructs her 2017 charcoal and pastel on paper *Fire Study (Point Dune)*, by isolating it into soot, a burnt stick of wood, and orange paper painted an inferno orange (*Fire Study, Assemblage*). Entomologists will be pinned and mounted by Mike Yokotake's unnervingly realistic, oversized carved wooden *Rhino Beetle*. Stephen Anderson's *4 Drones of the Apocalypse* (*Work, Conform, Obey, Die*) takes those dreary lemons and makes them colorful neon lemonade. The commodification of art gets a backhand in Molly Schulman's *LACMA Quick Shop Painting (Magritte)*, with its computer icon clicking on a purchase button superimposed over the French artist's *The Treachery of Images*. Near the front of the gallery, Made in California Solo Show winner Zara Monet Feeney's oil on canvas *Curtain After Intermission* rises on her blue mood version of Ingres' *Grande Odalisque*, a feminist acknowledgement that being naked and female may be the only way to get noticed in the art world. It also works as an optimistic indicator of future possibilities, a nod of the head to the other great work Bowling and Company have waiting inside for you.

"MADE IN CALIFORNIA"
at Brea Gallery, 1 Civic Center Circle #1, Brea, (714) 990-7730; www.breagallery.com. Open Thurs.-Fri., noon-5 p.m. Through Fri. $3.
"TWO*CUBED"
at OCCCA, 117 N. Sycamore St., Santa Ana, (714) 667-1517, www.occca.org. Open Thurs.-Fri., noon-5 p.m. Through Fri. Free.
"VISUAL CONVERSATIONS"
at Q Art Salon, 205 N. Sycamore St., Santa Ana, (714) 835-8833, www.qartsalon.com. Open Thurs.-Sun., noon-5 p.m. Through Sun. Free.

ARTS OVERLOAD

» AIMEE MURILLO

June 28-July 4

BESTSELLER: Peter Quilter's comedic play is about a group of writers' novel ideas coming alive onstage. Thur.-Sat., 8 p.m., Sun., 2 p.m. $47-$69. Through June 30. Long Beach Performing Arts Center, 330 E. Seaside Way. (562) 436-3610; www.internationalcitytheatre.org.

"EARTH, AIR, FIRE & WATER": Artist Natasha Sharo displays work based on her connection with the natural elements. Open Mon.-Fri., 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. Through Aug. 31. Founders Hall 2nd Floor Art Gallery at Soka University, 1 University Dr., Aliso Viejo. (949) 480-4000; natashasharo.com.

"PLACE AND DISPLACE": Painter Carlos Beltran Arechiga's exhibit explores themes of location and geographic boundaries in natural and constructed environments. Open Mon.-Thurs., 10 a.m.-9 p.m., Fri., 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Sat., 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Free. Through Aug. 10. Irvine Fine Arts Center, 14321 Yale Ave., Irvine. (949) 724-6880; irvinefinearts.org.

A TASTE OF GREECE GREEK FESTIVAL: Authentic cuisine will be available for purchase while performances and activities entertain the whole family. Fri., 5-11 p.m., Sat., noon-10 p.m., Sun., noon-9 p.m. $3, children 10 and under, seniors 65 and older, active military and veterans free. Saint Paul Greek Orthodox Church, 4949 Alton Pkwy., Irvine. (949) 733-2366, irvinegreekfest.com.

HR VEG FEST: Various plant-based food vendors will be joined by holistic industry members such as reiki energy healers, astrologers and mediums. Yoga sessions will also be available. Sun., noon-5 p.m. Free. Food sold individually. HARD Yoga, 6701 Warner Ave., Huntington Beach, (714) 375-3930; www.hard-yoga.com.

IVAN AMODEI'S SECRETS AND ILLUSIONS: The talented illusionist will transport guests to a mysterious trip to the Louvre, where he will display an array of dazzling tricks. Sun., 4 p.m. $45-$85. Not recommended for children under 10. Irvine Barclay Theatre, 4242 Campus Dr., Irvine. (949) 854-4646; www.thebarclay.org.

FIRKFEST: Unlimited tastings of more than 50 different casks and 30 different breweries, plus a mini nacho fest. Sat., 12-4 p.m. $40-$45; designated drivers, $15. 21+. Anaheim Packing House, 440 S. Anaheim Blvd., Anaheim. (714) 533-7225; www.firkfest.com.

WINE WEDNESDAY YOGA: Wind down during the midweek crunch in this Vinyasa flow yoga session suitable for yogis of all skill levels, followed by tastings of a Napa-based wine. Bring yoga mat. Wed., July 3, 5:30 p.m. $15, free for hotel guests. Pasea Hotel & Spa. (714) 668-6110; montagecollection.com.

One-Man Bayou Band

Greg Camphire's creative mind and ghostly sounds capture Orange County history

BY STEVE DONOFRIO

STEVE DONOFRIO

It's the first Sunday afternoon of the summer and Greg Camphire is standing under a tree in the Gospel Swamp at the Heritage Museum of Orange County, explaining how the chrysanthemum at his feet is about to become his hand mate. The crowd around him, made of families and music fans both young and old, looks on with a shared sense of curiosity. He and the plant are surrounded by an arsenal of Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) controllers, electronic drum pads, acoustic drums and cymbals.

This is Camphire's multimedia musical project, Spooky Action Labs. Originally a drummer, Camphire started conceptualizing the project a few years ago as a way to perform without a live band. "I wanted to make it like site-specific events that are one-time things where I create music specifically to go along with whatever location I'm playing at," he explains.

The idea came to fruition when Camphire was awarded the Investing In the Artist grant from the city of Santa Ana last year. "They were awarding grants [last] year to do projects this year," he explains. "And this being the 150th anniversary of the founding of the city of Santa Ana, they wanted projects that were thematically connected to the history, people and culture of Santa Ana." Spooky Action Labs, an immersive, site-specific project from the beginning, proved to be a good fit for this theme.

"I had several ideas and I ended up getting enough funding for two," Camphire says. The first performance, titled *Celebrating Alex Odeh*, took place at Makara Center for the Arts in Santa Ana last April. He and the Makara Center assembled a team of volunteers to translate into English a book of poetry by the slain Arab American civil rights activist. Camphire then composed an ambient soundtrack for the translators to read over during the event.

However, for this second project, *Spooky Action Labs at the Gospel Swamp*, the focus is all on Camphire. Wearing a straw hat and sunglasses, he enthusiastically describes the months of preparation that have led up to this performance as bright, irregularly spaced tones play in the background.

"As you can see, this wire is clipped onto the branches and the other end runs into this device called the MIDI Sprout," he explains. "It's converting the electromagnetic pulses that the plant naturally produces into digital information." He then uses MIDI controllers and a laptop running Ableton Live music production software to make music out of this information. "So you're listening to this plant singing to you live."

To be clear, the plant itself isn't producing any actual sound. "The MIDI information you're getting is just ones and zeroes," Camphire says. "So it's up to whoever's using it to assign a sound to each plant. So that's where I was able to get really creative and use my research about the plants," he adds.

"There's signage all along the nature trails at the Gospel Swamp. So you can read about a plant's traditional uses, maybe how Native Americans used it for medicinal purposes, or how it attracts certain kinds of birds or insects. So I used that to kind of give me a poetic description of each plant that would help me create a sound for it."

While Camphire is triggering sequences and improvising on percussion, it's not difficult to tell which plants might be fragrant and which ones might be poisonous. Some tones are sparkling and metallic while others are harsh and distorted. Some are downright threatening. But Camphire weaves them together into a cohesive and dynamic performance.

Spooky Action Labs at the Gospel Swamp also utilizes samples taken from all over the museum grounds. Since the museum agreed to collaborate on the project at the end of last summer, Camphire has visited the location about a dozen times to "basically record any sound that is associated with the museum," he says. "There are some historical Victorian-era houses there. Those immediately appealed to me because there are two different hundred-year-old pianos, a pump organ and a Victrola record player with records from, like, 1915 in there. So it was really obvious to me that I could make music with that stuff."

It's clear Camphire doesn't settle for the obvious. In addition to using the MIDI Sprout on various plants, he found other unconventional sounds throughout the grounds. "There's a really old creaky spiral staircase in one of the houses and I recorded myself walking on that, which makes for an amazing kick drum sound," he chuckles.

The performance, which Camphire describes as a musical séance, does have the spooky vibe that its title promises. "It has that kind of ghostly element, because some of the pianos were a little out of tune, but in a cool way that brings an interesting dissonance," he says.

"There were no encounters of any kind, with ghosts or whatever," he laughs. "I wouldn't want to put that out there. But just the vibe lent itself to a little bit of a darker performance." While Camphire may not have any literal ghost stories from this experience, he did work with instruments that have specific connections to old Santa Ana residents. Most notable of these is one of the pianos, which was gifted to Mary Elizabeth Maag on her 18th birthday in 1906.

"So I'm imagining she played this piano. You know, her fingers were on it, she played certain melodies on it. Those rang out into the house and the atmosphere. Whether it's just using your imagination or whether it's an actual sonic or psychic signature that's still in that area, it's definitely something to draw on as an artist," Camphire explains.

Through utilizing the natural sounds of the Gospel Swamp and recording samples of everything from the museum's blacksmith shop to a Victorian-era pump organ, Camphire was able to capture a literal bit of Orange County history and culture in his performance. Through hip-hop and drum and bass breakbeats, cacophonous sound collages, and jazz-like improvisation, Camphire has found a way to connect the past to the present. The only question now is where, and how, will he do it next?

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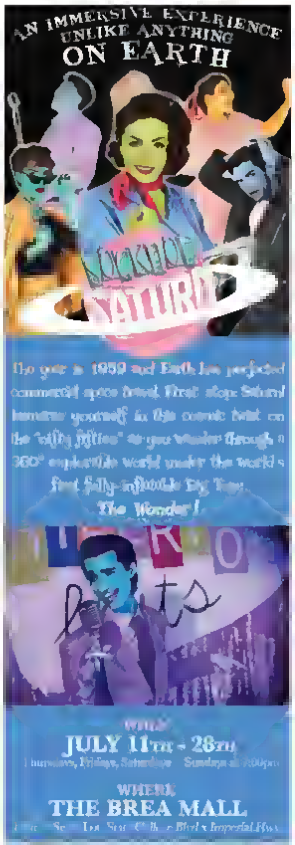

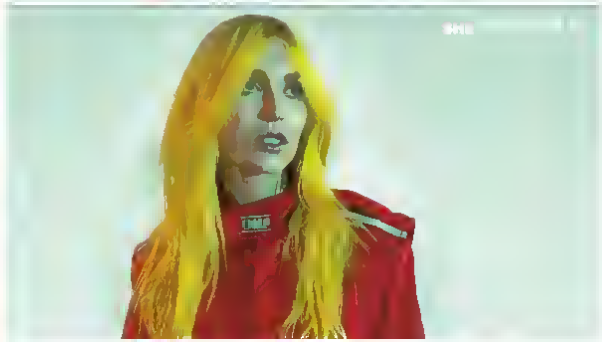

JAIME PARKHURST

A Star Is Reborn

Nikki Paige becomes a pop princess of her own making

BY NATE JACKSON

Music has always been a calling for Nikki Paige, though she hasn't always wanted to answer it. It might seem strange that the up-and-coming pop star with golden pipes and a glowing-yellow hairdo once rejected the life she'd been preparing for since she was a kid. It's even less likely that after walking away from the business in her late teens that she'd come back sharper and more fearless. But the goal for the Los Alamitos-bred singer/songwriter was always finding herself, not finding fame.

"I'm tired of making the same music that the industry expects us to hear just because it's a formula and it works," Paige says. She's fresh off a four-month U.S. tour on the strength of her single "Ring Ring" that includes hitting up radio stations with manager William Engram Jr. (a.k.a. "PoonDaddy") to show the gatekeepers that she deserves mainstream attention. "You can have your foot in the door with a formula and still try to be creative."

That creativity shows itself in the volume of work Paige has turned out in recent months. Through the handful of singles and videos she's already released—with more on the way, including the single "Happy I Am" and an EP set to drop at the end of summer—Paige's edgy, pop-alternative of the vocals show her spirit and newfound identity despite the pitfalls she has faced since signing her first publishing deal with Warner Chapel at the age of 11 and working with acts such as Ringo Starr. "I didn't really know what I was doing, and [I was] letting everyone run my projects because I was a little kid," Paige recalls. "After years of that, around 17 or 18 years old, I decided to quit. I was like, 'This isn't going anywhere, this is everybody else's idea—one minute I'm country, the next minute I'm pop.' I couldn't decide what direction I wanted to go."

At the time, being famous felt more like a chore than a blessing. Leaving her early brush with success behind, Paige began partying nonstop while doing her best to find her own identity. Though she tried not to take music seriously, it was a calling she could never fully ignore. Taking various stabs at a new singing career with failed label deals made it even tougher when she decided to return to music in her early 20s. But Paige always knew she didn't want to sound like a manufactured product, opting to be real above all else on her next time around. That meant finding her sound and style while in Orange County and enlisting the help of her friends to help her get her dream off the ground.

"I realized I can't rely on other people to make my career for me. I have to do that myself, so it helped me understand what being an independent artist means," Paige says. "I do have help from a team, but I really wanted to get it off the ground first. The thing I didn't realize was that you can do that with a talented group of friends that really believe in you."

So far, her strategy is working, evidenced by her growing Instagram following and top-tier, artistically sharp music videos for songs such as "Ring Ring" and "Get It Over." She found a great mentor in producer Mitch Mannan in Anaheim, where she recorded the bulk of her new songs.

Now that she's learning how to organize her thoughts and her career is being properly guided, all that fun she's having while answering her calling is finally starting to pay off. "I'm not gonna say I know exactly what to do, but I do know what to do in my situation every time that I go for it," Paige says. "So I'm excited to add everything that I've learned into my next project and see where it goes."

NJACKSON@OCWEEKLY.COM

NEW FOUND GLORY

COURTESY OF HOPELESS RECORDS

Friday

A VULTURE AWARE 8 p.m. $10. 21+. Alex's Bar, 2913 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach. (562) 434-8282, www.alexsbar.com

ELECTRIC FEELS Indie Rock+Indie Dance Night: 9:30 p.m., $10-$12, all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana. (714) 957-0600, www.observatoryoc.com

GINGER ROOT, MAMALARRY 9 p.m., $12, all ages. The Constellation Room, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600, www.observatoryoc.com

MINO MONOGRAM, WAX CHILDREN, DANIEL FERRERA 9 p.m., all ages, $5. 21+, free. La Santa, 220 E. 3rd St., Santa Ana, (657) 231-6005, www.lasantaoc.com.

ROONEY 7 p.m., $20, all ages. House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 W. Disney Way, Anaheim. (714) 778-2583, www.houseofblues.com/anaheim.

THROUGH THE ROOTS 6 p.m., $5, all ages. Garden Amp (The Locker Room), 12762 Main St., Garden Grove, (949) 415-8544, gardenamp.com

WET HAND DAN, TOROSBROS, DOUBLE D'S, OROTEC 9 p.m., $8, 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0039, www.wayfarercm.com

Saturday

JERAMIAH RECO 8 p.m., free. 21+. The Sidebar Rock N-Roll Kitchen, 122 E. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton. (714) 871-7469, www.sidebarfullerton.com

JOSE MARIA NAPOLEON 7 p.m., $59-$99, all ages. House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 W. Disney Way, Anaheim. (714) 778-2583, www.houseofblues.com/anaheim

LITTLE HURRICANE, CREATURE CANYON 9 p.m., $15, all ages. The Constellation Room, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana. (714) 957-0600, www.observatoryoc.com.

RAS 1 8 p.m., $12. 21+. Alex's Bar, 2913 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach, (562) 434-8282, www.alexsbar.com

THE RASH OGS, THE VIOLET MINOFIELD, DAYDREAMTIME MACHINE 8 p.m., $8. 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0039, www.wayfarercm.com.

Sunday

FURY; CEREMONY, SHEER MAG, RUGG, OZTORT 8 p.m., $15, all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana. (714) 957-0600, www.observatoryoc.com.

GETHEN JENKINS 7 p.m., $10. 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0039, www.wayfarercm.com

NEWFOUND GLORY 6 p.m., $32, all ages. House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 W. Disney Way, Anaheim, (714) 778-2583, www.houseofblues.com/anaheim

THE SPITS 2 p.m., $20. 21+. Alex's Bar, 2913 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach. (562) 434-8282, www.alexsbar.com

Monday

EMAEL 8 p.m., free. 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0039, www.wayfarercm.com.

JAY ELECTRONICA 8 p.m., $10-$20, all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana. (714) 957-0600, www.observatoryoc.com.

Tuesday

JIM JAMES + CLAYPOOL LENNON DELIRIUM 7 p.m., $45, all ages. House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 W. Disney Way, Anaheim. (714) 778-2583, www.houseofblues.com/anaheim

Wednesday

PUP, RATBOYS, BEACH BUNNY 8 p.m., $20, all ages. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600, www.observatoryoc.com

THEM EVILS, DEAD POET SOCIETY, DESERT OF TALKING SHADOWS, THE GRINGOZ 8 p.m., $10-$12, 21+. The Wayfarer, 843 W. 19th St., Costa Mesa, (949) 764-0039, www.wayfarercm.com

UMPHREY'S MCGEE 6:30 p.m., $30, all ages. House of Blues at Anaheim GardenWalk, 400 W. Disney Way, Anaheim. (714) 778-2583, www.houseofblues.com/anaheim.

Thursday, July 4

THE SUGAR CUTS PRESENTS LOST & FOUND 9 p.m., free., 21+. La Santa, 220 E. 3rd St., Santa Ana. (657) 231-6005, www.lasantaoc.com

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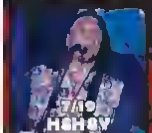
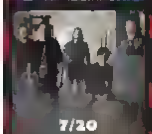

7/19 HENRY KAPONO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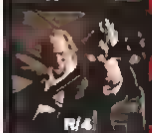
8/4 JEFF BRIDGES

8/7 THE BACON BROTHERS

8/15 (THE DRIFTERS)

8/16 THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS

8/30 CINDERELLA'S TOM KEIFER

9/6 JIHAD

9/15 SCOTT STAPP of CREED

6/28	KOZMIC BLUES (JANIS JOPLIN TRIBUTE)	
6/29	THE CHAISMAN AND THE ROAD (RAT PACK TRIBUTE)	
T/3	THE WAILERS	
T/5	MICKY DOLENZ	
T/6	BEATLES vs STONES	
T/12	THE PETTY BREAKERS (TOM PETTY TRIBUTE)	
T/13	LOS LONELY BOYS	
T/18	JEFFERSON STARSHIP	
7/18	HENRY KAPONO	
T/20	HINDER	
T/23	TED NUGENT	
7/24	TED NUGENT	
T/26	YACHTLEY CREW - THE TITANS OF SOFT ROCK	
7/2T	SKELETON CREW (GRATEFUL DEAD TRIBUTE)	
7/28	STRUNZ AND FARAN	
8/1	JAMES MCMURTRY	
8/3	NONK	
8/4	AN INTIMATE EVENING OF MUSIC AND CONVERSATION WITH JEFF BRIDGES / BEAT ROOT REVIVAL	
8/7	THE BACON BROTHERS	
8/9	SURLIMED	
8/15	THE PLATTERS w/ SPECIAL GUEST THE DRIFTERS	
9/18	THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS	
8/1T	LA GUNS	
9/21	JUSTIN HAYWARD	
8/28	SAVOY BROWN	
8/30	CINDERELLA'S TOM KEIFER	
8/31	WILD CHILD (DOORS TRIBUTE)	
9/8	SINBAD	
9/7	THE BARYS	
9/8	GLENN MILLER ORCHESTRA	
8/12	ADRIAN BELEW	
9/14	LED ZEPAGAIN (LED ZEPPELIN TRIBUTE)	
8/15	SCOTT STAPP OF CREED	
9/19	AL DI MEOLA	
8/20	HERMAN'S HERMITS	
9/21	HERMAN'S HERMITS	

UPCOMING SHOWS

9/22	GARY PUCKETT	11/1	CHAD BROCK FORMER MEMBER
9/27	QUEEN NATION	11/2	TYRONE WELLS - THE LIFT ME UP TOUR
9/28	QUEEN NATION	11/8	RUPER DIAMOND
10/4	TRASNCAN SINATRAS	11/10	DAVID WILCOX
10/5	GEOFF TATE'S OPERATION: MINDCRIME	12/7	BLUE OYSTER CULT
10/6	DON MCLEAN	12/20	GARY CHAD BOONE
10/11	DOKKEN	12/21	AMBROSIA
10/13	JUDY COLLINS	12/22	DAVID BENOIT CHARLIE BROWN CHRISTMAS
10/20	RICK WAKEMAN "GRUMPY OLD ROCKSTAR" TOUR	2/23	BURTON CUMMINGS
10/24	TAB BENOIT	3/15	AARON NEVILLE
10/26	DESPERADO (EAGLES TRIBUTE)	4/2	JOAN OSBOURNE / THE WEEPIES

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Tie Points

I'm a single gay guy in my late 30s. I'm quite introverted and a bit shy, yet I have a large sexual drive and a rich libido. I've always found the gay scene overwhelming, and my several attempts at online dating were not very successful. I feel my quiet ways tend to put people off, and I hardly ever get the chance to show my more playful or crazy sides, as it takes me a bit to feel comfortable enough to show those. Whenever I was able to, my partners were usually pleasantly surprised and we could enjoy plenty of fun, but I can count these occasions on the fingers of one hand. I actually have quite a few kinks—bondage being one of them—but so far, I have hardly been able to explore them with a partner. Often those drawn to me haven't really been of the sexually adventurous kind. By my looks, I don't really fit into any of the "tribes" that a lot of gay men identify with. I find myself on the outside looking in when searching for a nice guy for a date or more. Would you have any kind of advice to crack this shell of mine open?

Always Looked Over, Never Embraced

Next time you find yourself on the outside looking in, ALONE, take a moment to look around. Because that small scrum of guys who fit neatly into whatever gay tribe happens to be dominating the bar/pool/whatever—the guys on the inside looking at themselves or looking at their phones or looking at themselves on their phones—are usually surrounded by a much larger group of guys who don't fit neatly into that particular tribe or any other obvious tribe. And if the guys looking longingly at the easy and obvious tribe would look around, they'd see a whole lot of guys like them.

Did you know you have a motherfucking superpower that makes you a member of all gay tribes and your own unique tribe? "Bondage is the great unifier among kinksters," said Joshua Boyd, a gay bondage "enthusiast" in his mid-30s who lives and ties in the Seattle area. "Bondage guys are from all walks of life, and they range from twinks to muscle guys to bears, cubs, jocks and average Joes."

So just as you'll find gay guys in every race, ethnic group, economic class, faith community, etc., bondage guys can be found in every gay tribe, and bondage guys make up their own unique tribe.

"ALONE should put any search for a long-term relationship on hold and look for more casual kinky fun," said Boyd. "Recon (recon.com) has always been a good place for me to start conversations with fun guys—I even met my husband there. The bottom line is there are others who share his interests, and they are waiting to connect with him."

Boyd also describes himself as shy, introverted and having difficulty connecting—and not only is he married, ALONE but he also doesn't lack for casual-play partners, and he has playpics all over the Internet to prove it.

I recently watched shy, introverted Tyger Yoshi do a bondage demo at Trade, a gay leather bar in Denver, during which he suspended a guy from the ceiling. "When I first started exploring my interest in bondage, I was lucky enough to be in a city where opportunities were plentiful, even for a shy, introverted person like me," said Yoshi, who's also in his mid-30s. "There were people who wanted to mentor me, but I struggled taking that first step of accepting help."

The kind of help Yoshi is referring to can most easily be found at munches, i.e., casual meetups where kinky people, both queer and straight, socialize and connect with like-minded kinksters. Spend five seconds on Google, and you'll also find kinky educational organizations that offer classes for people who want to hone their bondage skills while learning about consent, safety and other best practices. And whether you're a bondage top (you want to tie) or a bondage bottom (you want to be tied) or a switch (be and be tied), you'll make friends in bondage classes. And if you wind up clicking with someone, that person isn't going to assume you're a prude, and that person will definitely be sexually adventurous.

"After you start making connections and building your circle, find local fetish/kink events that are happening around you—you may need to reach out to the pansexual community—and see if one of your new friends from the munch or the class or Recon is willing to go with you to check it out," said Yoshi. "And as you start exploring more of your kink side, consider the possibility of separating kink and sex at first. Let people know that you are interested in bondage but haven't tried much and want to practice. Having an exploratory or practice session is different from having a bondage sex session, and people may be more willing to facilitate that exploration. And from my experience, if you're able to get up the courage to go out to a kink play party (with a friend for support), the likelihood of finding someone who's willing to assist in new or first-time experiences increases."

So that thing you've been holding back until you get to know someone? Your interest in bondage? Lead with that. Get involved in the kink scene, work on your skill set, be friendly and open—be the nice guy—and you'll meet lots of men you have something in common with. Trust me, your tribe is out there.

Is having sex with multiple partners something prevalent in the gay community? It seems that having sex is a pretty big deal with gay men. Why?

You Won't Answer

Yes, the average gay guy has more sex partners than the average straight guy. But straight men would do everything gay men do if straight men could, but straight men can't because women won't. It's not that straight guys are any less interested in sex than gay guys are or that sex is any less of a "big deal" for straight men. And you know what? Women are just as horny and interested in sex as men—gay, straight or bi—and that includes sex with multiple partners. But women have to weigh every choice they make and every truth they tell against the very real threat of sexual violence at the hands of straight men and the lesser threat of being slut-shamed by straight men and other women. (Shout-out to the asexual gay, straight and bi men and women out there who aren't interested in sex with anyone—I don't mean to erase you, but I'm talking averages here, the centers of various bell curves, not deviations.)

On the Lovecast *(savagelovecast.com), this show is soooo gay. Contact Dan via mail@savagelove.net, follow him on Twitter @fakedansavage, and visit ITMFA.org.*

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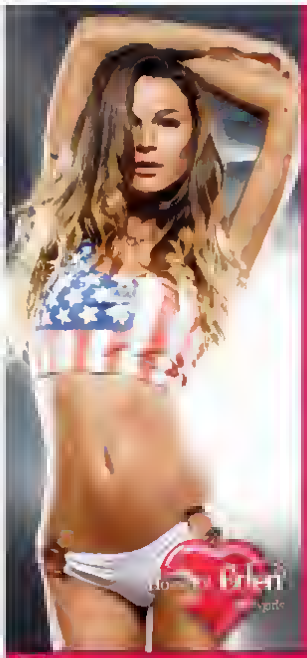

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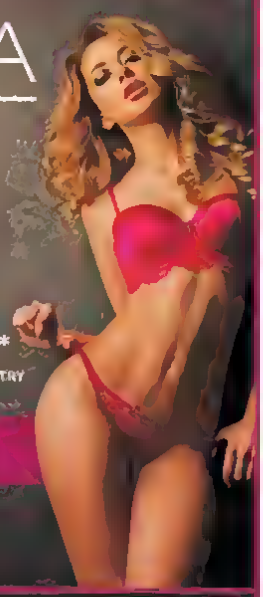

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Toke of the Week

» JEFFERSON VANBILLIARD

Lagunitas Hi-Fi Hops

AbsoluteXtracts and Lagunitas have your back this summer. The companies have teamed up to create a beverage that will have stoners and craft-beer enthusiasts alike quenching their thirsts without the downside of passing out in the backseat of a Lyft.

The 10-milligram-THC bottle of liquid zen known as Hi-Fi Hops has just the right amount of bitterness without any of the sugar, calories or alcohol your body usually has to process each time you crack open a cold one. The thing that sets this $9.20 elixir apart from other non-alcoholic beverages is the taste. A myriad of hops brewed without malt add a surprising amount of depth to a deliciously crisp finish.

If you're worried about keeping up with the party without the risk of feeling like a zombie the next day, then Lagunitas should be at the bottom of every cooler within a 10-foot radius of any body of water you find yourself in for the next few months. Plus, imagine how cool you'll look when everyone has to go home and you're still doing gainers into the deep end knowing you're going to sleep as soundly as a baby kitten later.

COURTESY OF LAGUNITAS

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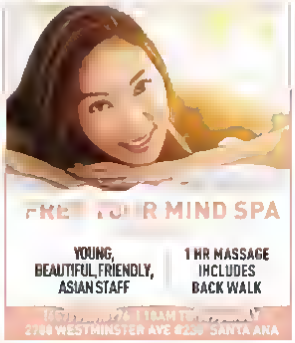
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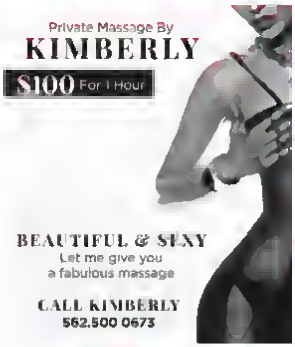
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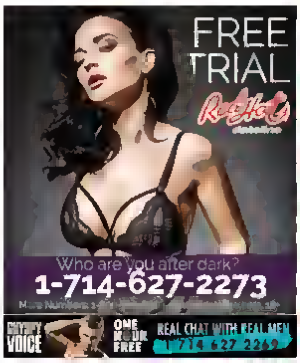
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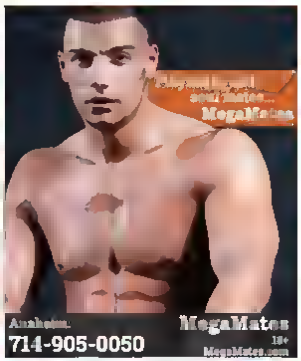
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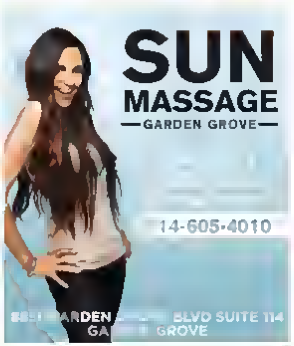
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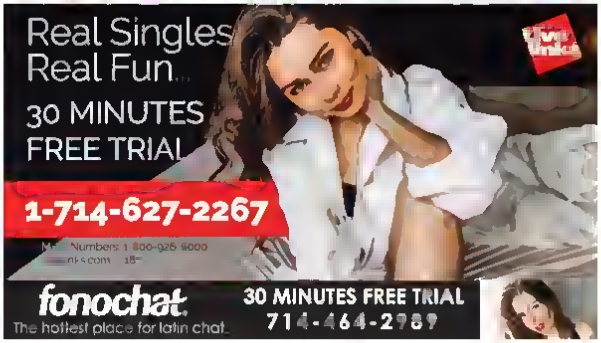
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One and Done

How i got fired from a radio station after my first on-air shift

BY POORMAN

FEDERICO MEDINA

There used to be a radio station in LA/Orange County called Star 98.7. (It's now known as ALT 98.7.) The format was kind of "soft alternative." It never had very good ratings. The station's biggest claim to fame was having Ryan Seacrest host the afternoon-drive show before he was famous.

Anyhow, Star decided to hire me in 2000. It didn't go well. I was fired after only one on-air shift. Here's what happened.

Star's general manager was Roy Laughlin, a huge fan of mine from my days at KROQ. He really wanted me on the air, but legendary program director Sam Bellamy (who was program director of KMET during that station's glory days in the '70s) didn't want anything to do with the Poorman.

After a few months of prodding by Laughlin, Bellamy reluctantly agreed to put me on the air one day a week, Sundays, from 7 p.m. to midnight. A one-day-a-week shift on the weekends is really a trip to "radio purgatory." If you aren't on the air Monday through Friday, you aren't going anywhere.

At this point in my career, I still had an ego and felt in my own mind I was a five-day-a-week, full-time DJ. I had to do something to prove it! So, with this obscure low-rated, Sunday-night, throw-away time slot, my demented "Poorbrain" concocted a desperado name for the shift, the "Sunday Night Spectacular." I would do something spectacular on the air every week until I hopefully was rewarded with a five-day-a-week shift. This turned out to be a very poor idea.

At the beginning of my first (and ultimately last) show, I let the listeners know they had to do something spectacular to win a great prize. The problem was I didn't have a prize to give away. So, I announced to the audience, "You can ask for anything on the radio and get it. Is there anybody listening who has a big prize we can give away?" Almost immediately, a gentleman responded. He called and announced on the show he was going to give away a $70,000 Lambo Kit—that's a build-it-yourself Lamborghini—to whoever did the most spectacular on-air stunt. We had our $70K prize on the fly!

I then asked what spectacular thing the listeners should have to do to win. A woman immediately called in and suggested the winner should be whoever could destroy something in the most "grandiose manner." I ran with it—and remember, none of this was preapproved by the radio-station management. It was pure Renegade Poorman!

The caller went first, shattering and destroying a wine glass in her sink live on the air. Everything just accelerated from there! The next caller announced he was going to take a baseball bat to his home stereo system, and he did so with the audio accompaniment of multiple loud blasts of bashing, splintering glass and smashing! It got way worse from there! Next up, a female caller said she would take a sledgehammer to the engine of her Monte Carlo. The sound of the sledge hammer crushing the engine multiple times was as loud as a power drill demolishing concrete!

Believe it or not, things got way worse! A dude called in and said he would one up the Monte Carlo engine smashing. He would strap on his racing helmet and drag race his souped-up, high-performance Nissan 300 ZX into a concrete pillar at 40 mph!

With a cellphone in the car capturing the live action, listeners heard the sick screech of the tires, the burning of rubber, the huge roar of the engine and the deafening sonic boom similar to a fighter jet breaking the sound barrier. Ridiculously loud! You then could hear the cellphone pinging around the inside of the Nissan and the groggy voice of this guy just after a concrete pillar totaled his car. How do we know this really happened? The guy texted us pictures afterward of his destroyed vehicle sandwiched around the concrete pillar and of himself in an old-school racing helmet.

Then the unthinkable happened.

When it came time to pick the winner of the Lambo Kit after several hours of this destruction fest, the guy who agreed to give it away came into the studio to announce his pick for the winner. He chose the woman who sledgehammered her Monte Carlo over the guy who drag raced his Nissan into the concrete pillar. His reasoning: The woman with the Monte Carlo had destroyed her only means of transportation, while the owner of the totalled Nissan had another vehicle.

I ended the show thinking this was so much fun, like a little kid having the time of his life, but suddenly, I got that sick feeling knowing the second I turned off the mic I would be gone. The request line rang immediately after the show. It was Guy Oseary, talent manager of Madonna and U2, among other superceleb rities. I met him when he was 15, at the time, he was a fan of my show on KROQ, and he called asking if his dad could be a judge for my annual Bikini Search. I said yes, even though I didn't know him, and Oseary became megafamous afterward. We stayed friends. He was screaming at me, saying, "How can you do this!?! Are you nuts! You're on Star 98, and you just blew it. I can't believe you did what you did!"

The next day, Star fired me.

Needless to say, the dude with the Nissan was pissed. He contacted Clear Channel Communications, which owned Star 98.7, threatening to sue it for $50,000. Ultimately, Clear Channel settled with the guy. And there you have it. The end—and not a happy one.

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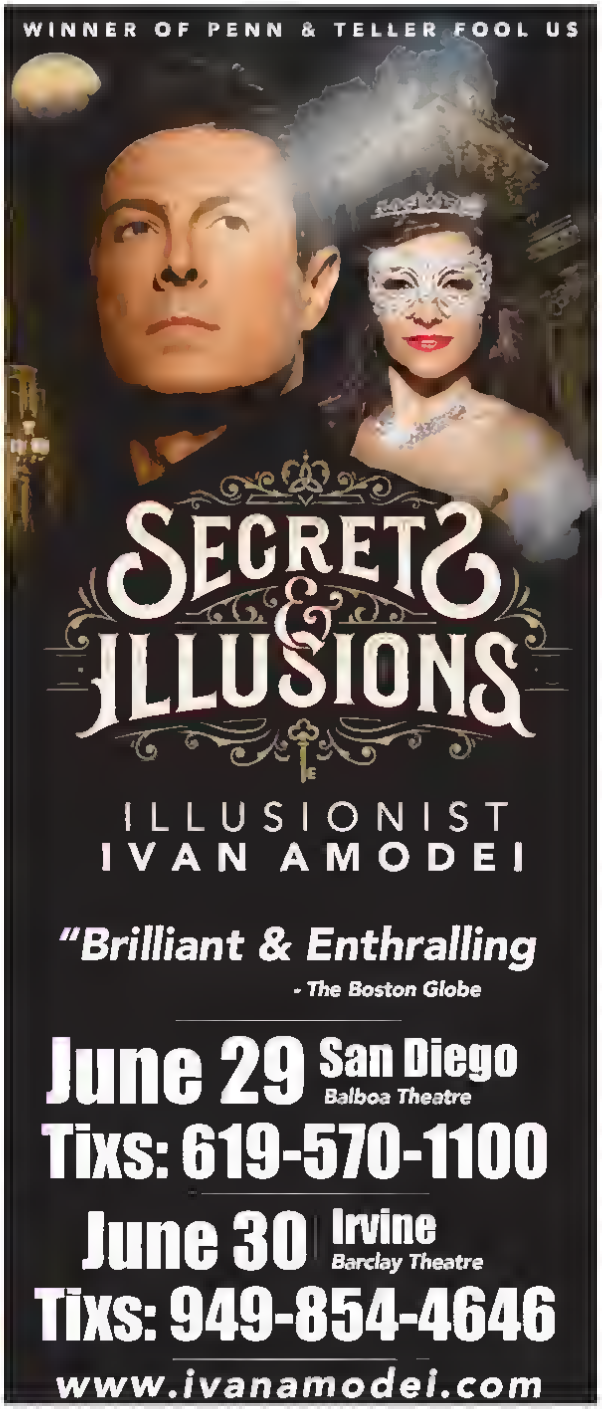

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